1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

693
273
352
516

PLATE VIII. The clerk of a Native Court, with one of the court assessors, sits in the chief's village issuing a permit for selling beer to a man who has come on behalf of his sister.

[222]

PLATE IX. A Native Authority councillor, sitting on the verandah of the Native Court in his county, issues passes to men wishing to collect caterpillars. There are no edible caterpillars in Ngoniland, and Ngoni who wish to collect them provide themselves with passes to show to the Cewa chiefs in whose counties caterpillars are found.

[Facing p. 153]

/12 cont'd/

The maize is shelled as required, the grains are pounded in a mortar, and then soaked in water for three or four days, if there is time. They are then pounded again, and the flour winnowed out. The residue is ground between two stones. The husks obtained after the first pounding are used as animal fodder, and in beer making. The diligent housewife pounds twice a week, each pounding lasting for about three hours. It is usual for a group of women living as neighbours to pound at the same time, singing together.

The maize flour is dried in the sun, and then put into a pot or basket until required for porridge or beer. Porridge forms the basis of most meals, although in February and March there may not be enough maize left in the storehouses to make this possible. Adults eat porridge in solid form, kneading handfuls of it between their fingers before eating, but infants are fed on fluid porridge made from the ground flour. The herdboys in charge of the cattle may use the milk to make their porridge with. Cooking is women's work, but men by themselves on a journey or working on the tobacco farms will cook porridge for themselves. Green mealies, usually fried, are eaten when available.

Relish is required to go with the porridge, the commonest relishes being pumpkin leaves and hibiscus leaves. There are in addition many wild fruits and leaves searched for in the bush at their appropriate seasons, while the gardens provide pumpkins, cucumbers, various kinds of beans and peas, and edible gourds. The most sought-after relish, and one of the most infrequently found, is meat. Chickens are given to honoured visitors, while beef, mutton, pork, and goat meat are eaten when they can be found. Livestock other than chickens are killed for eating only on ceremonial occasions, such as funerals or marriages, but owners not infrequently kill animals and sell the meat to raise money to pay damages, to finance a journey, or to obtain labour in the garden. Animals that die are usually eaten. Some people keep ducks, pigeons and tame guinea fowl, while such game as is killed on the /13/ hunt is divided among the hunters and taken home to be eaten. Owners of guns sometimes hunt by themselves and sell the meat.

13:Fraser M-5 (ca. 1890) 1901
FR5 Ngoni FR5

The art of cultivating the ground is only now being learned by the Ngoni. Formerly this was the work of the slaves. The masters know how to kill not to till. The soil is fairly rich though not nearly so fertile as what is found at the lake shore and in the deep valleys between. Maize is the great crop. But owing to the devastation of locusts for several years in succession, the Ngoni have learned to plant also reserve gardens of kasava, for the locusts and drought can scarcely affect this crop. A great variety of vegetables is cultivated, peas, beans, tomatoes, pumpkins, and so on. I have counted a variety of twenty-two different vegetables in the gardens beside one village.

These vegetables are used as relish, but the staple food is always maize porridge, and a tasty dish it is. The maize is well cleaned, ground into a fine flour, and when cooked by a clever woman makes a most tempting dish of white porridge. The relish may consist of a piece of stewed fowl or goat, or well boiled vegetable. The greatest dainty that was ever offered to me was a dish of lovely maize porridge with relish of stewed caterpillars. I did without the relish on that occasion. An interesting thing about these caterpillars is that they live on the top of trees, and the natives, to get at them, will hew down the tree. You can see how delicate a dish it makes if every caterpillar in the dish has been got at the cost of a tree. They take the place of the old European dish of peacocks cooked in their feathers.

No native thinks he has eaten until he has had his porridge. A missionary whom I know once unwisely gave a feast to his elders, feeding them on European food. They ate till they could eat no more, then stretching themselves, and after politely expressing their satisfaction by audible sounds of satiety, they rose and and said, "We must now go home to our porridge."

The maize and vegetables are grown with very little trouble, but there is also a species of millet which is largely cultivated, and at great cost to the country. The ground has to be carefully prepared, trees are hewn down in the hot season, and left to dry up in the blazing sun. The whole patch of garden is covered over with these trees and the branches, then when the first clouds appear, the wood is fired. For a day it blazes, and then during the gathering of the clouds the atmosphere is thick with the smoke of burning trees. The rains come and wash the carbon into the soil, and it makes an excellent fertiliser. But the crop exhausts the ground in two or three years, so another patch of